



Chairman Robert Aderholt

*Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

**FY 2017 Budget Hearing
Marketing and Regulatory Program Mission Area of USDA
March 3, 2016
Opening Statement As Prepared**

I am pleased to begin our review of the fiscal year 2017 budget request from the agencies of USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Program mission area. I would like to welcome to the Subcommittee Mr. Ed Avalos, USDA's Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

Also joining us today are Mr. Kevin Shea, Administrator for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, or APHIS; Ms. Elanor Starmer, Acting Administrator for the Agricultural Marketing Service, or AMS; Mr. Larry Mitchell, Administrator for the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, or GIPSA; and Mr. Mike Young, USDA's Budget Director.

I have emphasized in previous hearings four goals for this Subcommittee as we move through the fiscal year 2017 appropriations process. The first goal is increasing oversight, efficiency and the need for effective outcomes; the second is keeping rural America vibrant; the third is supporting American farmers and ranchers; and the fourth is protecting the health of people, plants and animals.

The Marketing and Regulatory Programs mission area is key to accomplishing many of these goals. Your agencies implement programs every day that support U.S. producers with domestic and international marketing opportunities, address agricultural threats to safeguard animal and plant health, and ensure fair practices in the marketplace – all of which have made rural America a world leader in agriculture production.

USDA is requesting a total of \$1.03 billion in discretionary resources in FY 2017 for the MRP mission area, a modest increase of \$8 million from the 2016 enacted level. For AMS and GIPSA, the request maintains current activities with the only requested increases for pay costs. However, APHIS's increases for animal health and emergency preparedness are mostly offset by decreases to popular and beneficial programs that receive bipartisan support. For example, APHIS has requested an increase to enhance implementation of the Lacey Act provisions. I have trouble supporting such an increase at the expense of higher priority and more effective animal and plant health programs, many of which the agency has proposed to decrease. It is this Subcommittee's responsibility to ensure that the additional funds being requested for several initiatives are not to the detriment of critical and successful programs. As the request is

analyzed, I will be looking for evidence that current efforts are effective, and I would like to know what industry and public support exists for the expanded efforts.

Last year at this hearing we discussed the importance of your mission area establishing a long-term strategic infrastructure plan that is crucial to moving products domestically in order to expand trade and marketing opportunities. USDA had been reacting to market disruptions like those at the ports and railways instead of having a proactive plan in place. The FY 2016 agriculture appropriations explanatory statement directs USDA to develop an infrastructure plan that will benefit American producers, and we look forward to receiving that report.

In recent years, we have provided additional funding for APHIS to address significant agricultural threats. We are appreciative of your work with the private sector to address citrus greening and other threats to plant and animal health, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza.

As you know, I have quite a few poultry producers in the 4th district of Alabama. The Alabama poultry industry employs over 85,000 people and generates about \$15 billion annually. In the event of an avian influenza outbreak in northern Alabama, our folks could face billions of dollars in losses. This is why I greatly appreciate APHIS working with its partners in the public and private sector to prevent, control and eradicate this disease. I know all of us will appreciate hearing more from you on the lessons APHIS learned in combating the disease and how the request supports your efforts as we move forward.

Today and in the coming months, we expect to have an ongoing dialogue with your agencies in order to develop a fair and responsible budget for the next fiscal year. We will have tough allocation decisions to make and again, I want to be sure that we maintain funding for the most critical and successful programs.

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